

YALI Voices: What's on your CV/résumé?

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Anabela Marcos, a leader in the human resources industry, is also the founder of [Gestão Profissional \(GP\)](#), a talent-recruiting agency based in Angola. She's seen plenty of CVs/résumés in her 10 years of working in human resources. She explains the mistakes that are most often seen on CVs/résumés and what to do to correct them.

Some mistakes can seriously compromise the screening of the CV/résumé of a good professional in the recruitment process and eliminate a candidate from the available job vacancy. The list of common errors is long, but I can list only a few that we find on a daily basis:

1. Strangely enough, job seekers still do not see the CV/résumé as their “business card” for recruiters. You can have a lot of experience, a lot of skills, but if you cannot put a preview of it in a positive way in the CV/résumé, the job market will never know.
2. In personal information, it is very common for people to exaggerate the amount of information. Information such as parents' names, passport number, driving license number and others are not relevant at this stage. Just enter your full name, contact details and date of birth. Other required data will be requested at a later stage.
3. Unless there is a requirement from the company or the type of vacancy, I also do not recommend including a photograph in the CV/résumé, but if necessary, please use a professional photo. Photos with strange poses and inappropriate scenarios are quite compromising.
4. Lack of specificity is also a common failure. Some people think that the longer the CV/résumé, the better. It's just the opposite. A CV/résumé too long without objectivity is a big mistake. The ideal is a single page for more junior candidates and a maximum of three pages for those with more experience. It is necessary to focus on the data related to the vacancy in question. The recruitment is a dynamic process and the recruiters should not waste much time when analyzing.
5. Grammar and spelling errors along with inconsistent formatting. When a CV/résumé is visibly cluttered or without a standard format, it loses its value, giving an air of disinclination and disinterest on the part of the candidate because it shows that the candidate did not put effort into the presentation.

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Adapting Your Resume for the Recipient

No matter who you ask, writing your resume can be a challenging task. And when you haven't

updated your resume in a long time, it can be hard to know where to start. What experiences or accomplishments should you include—or not? How do you make sure you're using the correct language to describe your work? What about formatting? Crafting the perfect resume can take a lot of hard work and dedication.

But even the best resume or CV may fall short of its goal if it's not formatted appropriately for the recipient. Just as an American resume may need to be tailored specifically for an employer in the U.K., an African CV may need to be altered for a prospective employer in the U.S.

Before you're ready to apply to jobs, internships, or fellowships in the U.S., you should prepare an American-style resume, which follows a specific format. Otherwise, hiring managers may overlook your application. To help you create a winning resume that's ready for American audiences, the YALI Network has compiled this guide filled with helpful resume-writing advice. Read on for tips and tricks that will help you land a job!

First, let's define our terms:

What's the difference between a CV and a resume?

The short answer: Length, purpose, and layout.

In many African countries, as well countries such as Canada, the U.K., Ireland, and New Zealand, CVs are the prevailing format used by job-seekers. Unlike resumes, a CV—short for *Curriculum Vitae* in Latin—is very comprehensive. Besides education, work experience, and skills, CVs often list categories like professional achievements, awards, honors, and publications. CVs can be much longer than resumes, and provide a detailed overview of a person's accomplishments or work history. In the U.S., CVs are primarily used by academics and those looking for work in universities or higher education.

A resume, on the other hand, is a concise document typically not longer than one page, that lists a person's work history, education, and experience. The goal of a resume is to make an individual stand out from the competition. That's why resumes are customizable documents that can be adjusted to fit a certain position. And it's in a job applicant's best interest to change their resume from one job application to the next, tailoring it to the specific requirements of each job posting.

What's the difference between an American resume and an African resume or CV?

While African CVs are typically longer and include a range of personal information, including gender, birthplace, and courses completed, American resumes are much shorter (one page) and are usually limited to professional experience and skills. They should not include information such as such as age, gender, height, weight, marital status, photos, etc. That's because it's illegal for U.S. employers to make employment decisions based on certain attributes or preferences of applicants. By sharing this kind of information in your resume, you could discourage an employer from contacting you.

Instead, American-style resumes should provide a chronological summary of education, work history, credentials, and other accomplishments. They can also include other optional sections, such as job

objectives or summaries, special skills, and volunteer service.

But your resume shouldn't include every experience you've ever had; it should be as concise as possible. Think of your resume as a marketing document that will sell you as the perfect candidate for the job. For each resume you send, highlight only the accomplishments and skills that are most relevant to the job you are applying for

American Resume Example

In the U.S., the average job recruiter spends approximately six seconds looking at a resume, so it's especially important for job-seekers to format their resumes in a clear and easy-to-read format that gets information across to the reader quickly. Here are some ideas for successfully writing your best resume:

- It's always a good idea to make your resume specific to the position you are seeking. To do this, present your educational and professional experience in a way that matches the requirements and duties of the position.
- You should also make sure that you proofread your resume with an English spell check program. Spelling matters, and even small mistakes or typos can put you in the "no" pile. Once you have completed your own edits and corrections, have a friend review your resume for any mistakes.

Formatting:

1. Length: Resumes should be limited to one page, single-sided.
2. Size: The standard size for an American resume is 8.5 x 11- inch paper with 1-inch margins on all sides.
3. Indentation and Bullet points: Use whitespace to make it easy for a hiring manager to read your resume. Use indentation and bullet points to break up and highlight information. A dense resume has more information in it, but can be hard to read. A spacious resume might have less information, but your reader will understand more of it.
4. Font: Use a font that's easy to read, such as Arial, Helvetica, or Times New Roman.
5. Paper: Use quality paper that is the same color as your cover letter.

Content:

1. Order your education and work experience chronologically with the most recent at the top.
2. Do not include any personal information such as age, gender, height, weight, marital status, photos, etc.
3. The names of companies and post-secondary schools should be written in your native language, while all other content should be written in English.
4. Describe your experience in terms of responsibilities, actions, and accomplishments. Try to use action verbs (e.g. managed, directed, organized, led) when possible.
5. Use a professional-sounding email domain for your contact information.


